



Confessions of a Token Wife

Or

Life with the Dean of Alaskan Trade Token Collectors

by Irene Shuler

It's hard to realize, but at one time I was a sweet young thing who didn't know a bingle from a bongo, or a token from a toucan. Then my life took a turn for the better: I met Kaye Dethridge. I've never been the same.

One day about thirty years ago, my friend Helen called and asked me if I knew anything about Alaska tokens. I said I had heard about them and had a couple, but didn't really know much more than that. She said she had a fellow there at her shop in Sitka who was asking about tokens. He had seen some old bottles in the shop window and had come in to inquire, thinking that someone with old bottles might have tokens also. Helen told him she would call her bottle-digging partner to see if she knew anything and so she did and he wanted to come and see what I had, and talk tokens. I said okay.

Soon thereafter I looked out the window and saw a handsome dude approaching my front door. At that time I had been a widow for eight years and had made a pleasant life for myself working as a court reporter and air taxi dispatcher. Comfortable with my single status, I wasn't looking to change things.

Over many cups of coffee, and later a nice dinner at a nearby restaurant, we talked about our mutual interest in old stuff, bottle digging, and exploring the old canneries, mines and other attractions of Southeast Alaska. Kaye lived in Juneau and was working in Sitka at the time, which had been my home for twenty years.

I learned that he was a serious (fanatical?) collector of Alaska trade tokens (those of you who collect something, or who live with collectors, know that look – that million-mile stare, that little secret world that is hard to penetrate, you've either observed it or you have been in it yourself), and had even co-authored a book about them. I was impressed. Anybody who has the patience and discipline to finish a book is way up there in my estimation.

Kaye went back to Juneau, but we kept in touch. The next time he was working in Sitka, he brought some wonderful trade beads, colored glass insulators, old bottles, and other items. Who needs heart-shaped boxes of chocolates and



continued on page 57

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Our thanks to Irene Shuler for our lead article this month. My only criticism is that I bet 30 years ago, the word "dude" was not in her vocabulary.

Kaye has been most generous over the years sharing his knowledge. It continues today, as I am sure you have noticed as I "lift" his scans of Alaska tokens to use in the newsletter.

The two people that have done the most for the hobby are Kaye Dethidge and Ron Benice. So, Doris, it's your turn ;)

Summer seems to be a slow time for eBay. The big item this month was a 50¢ token from Deep Sea Salmon Co. of Cape Edwards realizing \$1,140. A 6¼¢ from the Juneau Hotel (B-35a) brought a respectable \$760. I think the buy of the month was the Smoke House from Nenana at \$40. There are many items that did not receive any bids.

Candy Waugaman brought in the huge ad you see reduced on the last page (63). I am sure the illustration is from a postcard that I have seen. The original would be a great "go-with" if you have a Horton & Moore token.

And finally, I have been playing with gold again. See page 59 for my latest gold tokens. I failed to put prices in the article: 1 DWT - \$75; ½ DWT - \$40; and ¼ DWT - \$25; plus \$5 postage per order.

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PRICES REALIZED

Selected prices realized from eBay:

Anchorage , Joe Flowers, 5¢, B-18aI	OB195.00NB
Brooks (Livengood) , Livengood Inn, 25¢, B-2a	40.00OB
Cape Edwards , Deep Sea Salmon, 50¢, B-1d	1,140.00
Cordova , MacCormac, no denom., B-23a	76.00
(Cordova) , V&A Club, 5¢, B-39, tentative	20.00OB
Dalby , Notti, \$1, B-1c	295.00OB
Dillingham , Willow Tree, \$1, B-5a	450.00OB
Fairbanks , F&G, no denom., B-15a	OB125.00NB
Haines , Brie Co., 12½¢, B-2a	OB295.00NB
Juneau , Juneau Drug, 5¢, B-35a	OB275.00NB
Juneau , Juneau Hotel, 6¼¢, B-38a	760.00
Juneau , Juneau Liquor, 12½¢, B-39b	OB95.00NB
Juneau , The Mecca, 12½¢, B-50c	OB175.00NB
Juneau , Occidental Hotel, 12½¢, B-56c	OB60.00NB
(Ketchikan) , The Electric, 50¢, B-13a	OB20.00NB
Ketchikan , Northern Hotel, 6¼¢, B-38a	95.00
Ketchikan , White Cab Co., B-T6a	24.02
Kodiak , Mecca Bar, 12½¢, B-9a	OB125.00NB
Kukak Bay , Hemrich Pkg., \$10, B-1gI	OB150.00NB
Latouche , Little, 12½¢, B-2a	123.59
Nenana , The Portland, \$1, B-6a	OB195.00NB
Nenana , Smoke House, 12½¢, B-7a	40.00OB
Nome , BoT, 12½¢, B-8eI	OB150.00NB
Nome , Breakers, 12½¢, B-9a	305.00
(Nome) , BoT, BBC 12½¢, unl., questionable	169.50
Nome , Nome Novelty, 25¢, B-38a	OB95.00NB
Palmer , ARRC, 1¢, B-1a	93.00
Palmer , ARRC, 1¢, B-1a	68.89
Palmer , ARRC, 1¢, B-1a	58.00
Palmer , ARRC, 5¢, B-1b	61.00
Palmer , ARRC, 5¢, B-1b	40.50
Palmer , ARRC, 10¢, B-1c	102.55
Palmer , ARRC, 25¢, B-1d	123.50
Palmer , ARRC, 50¢, B-1e	86.00
Palmer , ARRC, \$1, B-1f	127.51
Palmer , ARRC, \$5, B-1g	233.55
Palmer , ARRC, \$10, B-1h	152.43
Palmer , ARRC, Set less \$5, 7 pcs.	RLOB700.00NB
Palmer , ARRC, Set less \$5, 7 pcs.	RL900.00BIN
Palmer , Palmer Creamery, 1 Qt, B-5a	177.50
Seldovia , Joe Hill, 25¢, B-2b	OB295.00NB
Tenakee , Brunswick Billiard, 12½¢, B-1a	82.09
Yakutat , Y&S Ry., \$1, B-3d	95.00OB
AYPE , Alaska Gold, ¼ DWT, ICG MS-62	OB395.00NB
AYPE , Alaska Gold, ¼ DWT, ICG AU-50	158.05RNM
AYPE , ¼ DWT	220.05
AYPE , ½ DWT	205.05
AYPE , 1 DWT	147.50
AYPE , 1 DWT	146.94

OB = Opening Bid NB = No Bid RL = relist
 RNM = Reserve Not Met R = Reserve W = withdrawn
 BIN = Buy it now DNS = Did Not Sell

Confessions, cont.

bouquets of posies?

Later that year, Kaye moved to Sitka and we began our odyssey together, one that has continued for more than thirty years, and as we became better acquainted, I learned more about his background. Kaye had gone to high school in Ilwaco, Washington, about thirty miles or so from where my mother was raised on the Columbia River, and where I had spent a year of high school.

After joining the military in the early fifties, he had gone to Juneau with the Alaska Communication System (ACS), a branch of the Army.

Although he had been a collector of various items throughout his life, particularly coins, his interest in tokens started in 1958 when he bought his first tokens, an ARRC set, from a coin shop in Seattle. Then his fascination rocketed when he saw a little book entitled "Alaska's Coinage Through the Years." He and his first wife, Nancy, were operating a coin shop in Juneau at that time and when they saw this

book, they realized that they had tokens which weren't listed in it, and they contacted one of the authors, Ken Bressett. That led to their involvement in writing a second edition, the little green book of the same name.

At one point, Kaye published a little token newsletter, titled "Bingle Babble." He wrote every issue himself, on mimeograph stencils (remember those?), cranked them out, and mailed them. Unfortunately, at that time there wasn't enough widespread interest to generate the income necessary to pay the postage, so that endeavor came to a halt.

All this work, and the associated patience, persistence, and research, nourished what would become a life-long passion for these little metal pieces, each of which represents a piece of the fascinating history of our state, and set the stage for Kaye's token quest. Kaye and Nancy took up the challenge of writing letters (by hand) to every postmaster in Alaska, asking if they knew anyone who might have some tokens they would be will-

SALOON TOKENS OF THE UNITED STATES

by Al Erickson

- * Lists about 6,400 saloon tokens
- * Also lists Canadian, Mexican and International saloon tokens
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The cost is \$65 postpaid. The catalog will be available on or about March 15, 2008. Due to a limited production run, receipt of your check guarantees a copy of this long overdue saloon token reference. To reserve your copy, send check or money order to:

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tokenal939@hotmail.com

to #10/08

Confessions, cont.

ing to sell. Replies trickled in from all corners of the state. He answered every one and some were quite interesting. One fellow wrote and said he didn't have any tokens, but he had a petrified stump he would send if Kaye were willing to pay the shipping. Kaye couldn't resist; he had to have it. Another wrote about the tokens he had ordered for his store, how many had been made, and he then sold the remainder to Kaye, stating that he had "peddled beans long enough" and was getting out of the business.

During the seventies, Kaye wrote about 500 letters a year, answered inquiries, and tracked down things he had heard about. A gentle reminder, perhaps, that he was still interested in purchasing that neat token. It sometimes seemed that every other inquiry was from someone wanting to sell a 1959 Fairbanks Trade Dollar. Everyone had heard of them or had one of them.

Then, in 1983, I got my first computer. After a few classes, and much discussion, it became clear that a computerized database listing of the tokens would be a fine and useful thing to have. Kaye decided to list all tokens he had ever heard of, not just those in his own, extensive, collection. I had learned the program dBase II and I taught him to use it. Countless hours were then spent in listing everything. It was a monumental task, but it got done. At first there was a certain amount of "Help, I'm stuck." But we both learned and those times became much fewer, and as the years passed, each time something new came to light, it was added to the list, making it a work in progress to this day.

Through the years Kaye periodically sent out fixed-price lists of tokens and associated memorabilia, to a growing number of customers. In Sitka we had these printed by a local printer and mailed out approximately 450 of them three or four times a year. This was a labor-intensive and rather expensive procedure, but helped to keep in touch with the token fraternity, turn over the duplicates, and generate enough income to help pay for new items to be added to the main collection. Kaye's computer skills became more extensive as he learned to compose and design these lists, using WordStar, an early word-processing program.

One time we were in Anchorage inventorying and appraising a token collection, working in a basement office in the owner's home when an earthquake hit. It startled me so much I turned off the computer and got ready to evacuate. That wasn't necessary and luckily I had just backed up the database to a separate disk a few minutes before.

Then, one fateful day in 1998, we received an email from a fellow in Washington saying "Hey Kaye, you should be selling on eBay." We had no idea what eBay was, but quickly checked it out. We thought this might be something to think about, as apparently there were about 260,000 members, all of whom no doubt were dying to start token collections. Of course, by now there are about a zillion members.

In the beginning of our eBay operations, the process of selling on eBay was not as automated as it is now, and it took some doing to figure it all out, composing the auction pages, making good scans of the material, getting the scans on to the auction pages, etc. I threw myself into this side of it with a vengeance, and piece by piece, figured out the steps necessary.

We put our first little group of items on in February, 1998. And with almost unbearable impatience, we waited to see if anyone would notice. Aha, in a day or two there came a bid. We were launched. Another bid, we were wildly successful. Well, maybe not, but we sure were hooked. We had visions of someone sitting before their computer in the far-off reaches of the universe, saying "Holy cow, I've always yearned to have one of these Harry Brown tokens and here one is on eBay." That may seem a little farfetched, but by now we've sold Alaska tokens to folks in at least twenty countries. It makes you wonder how that person in Hong Kong, Denmark, Romania, etc., ever learned about the bingles of Alaska.

Since Kaye retired in 1995, we have lived part-time in Ocean Park, Washington, and the rest of the time in Sitka, Alaska. The eBay token operation is perfect for us, as we can pack up the bulk of our stock in trade in the van along with the computers, cat, and other trappings, load it on the Alaska ferry, and be at our alternate home in a few days.

As many collectors have discovered, the personal connection made between one collector and another is one of the main benefits of this hobby. Living in Alaska, especially in earlier years, having a chance to meet the other guy with the same passion has not been so easy, but contacts made by mail and, later, by email, start friendships that last for many years.

Our journey has been an interesting one, filled with history, and I surely have learned a lot from Kaye and his tokens. I feel privileged to have become a part of this ongoing saga.

SHEEP CREEK, KOYUKUK MINING DISTRICT

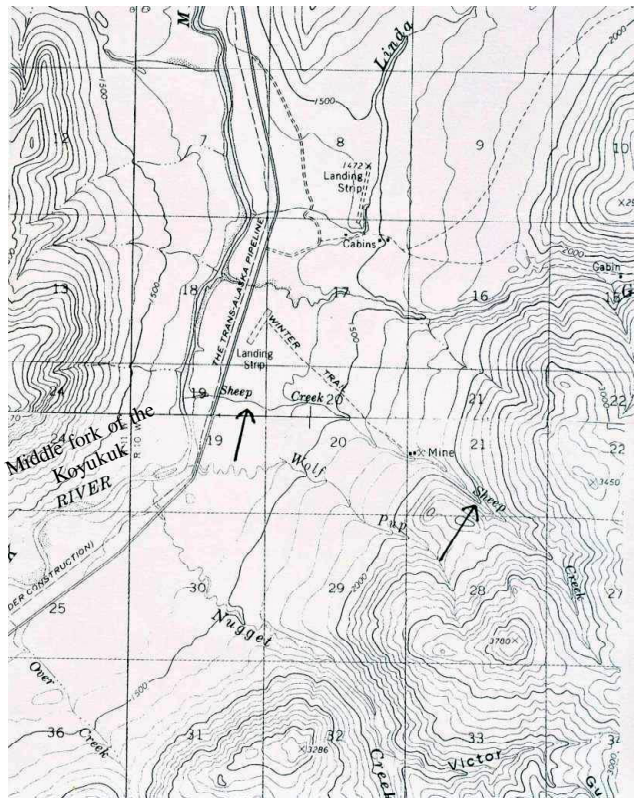


ENLARGED

I have recently purchased some gold from Sheep Creek in the Koyukuk Mining District. Sheep Creek flows into the middle fork of the Koyukuk River, up north by Wiseman. Gold from this area is the purest in the state, with reports as high as 97.5% pure. There are no reports on Sheep Creek, but specific gravity after I melted the gold indicates an approximate fineness of .900+

I was trying to decide whether I should make 5 DWT or 1 DWT tokens. Some feedback indicated that people preferred the smaller size. Fortunately I had a die already partially prepared. It had been ground so that it was flat and square. All I had to do was hand sand it with ever finer grits to get it ready.

Once the die face was ready, I hand punched in the lettering. Obviously not perfect. But I like to think I get a little better each time. The new obverse die reads



“Sheep Creek, 1 DWT, Koyukuk”. Having done this die, I can see changes I will make when I do another die.

I am using the “Native Gold” die that has been used with all of my other 1 DWT tokens.

I anticipate a “series” of 1 DWT tokens from different sources. Already, I have done Gold King Creek in the Bonnifield Mining District; beach gold from Nome(N); Dome Creek in the Fortymile Mining District(M); and Eagle Creek in the Circle Mining District(E).

Because the dies states where the gold is from, there is no need to counterstamp the 1 DWT tokens. The ¼ DWT and ½ DWT tokens are counterstamped with a “K” for Koyukuk.

RARE ALASKA GOLD



A rare “Alaska Gold” token appeared on eBay, only to be withdrawn shortly thereafter.

Mike Locke reports the following: The piece weighs 1.56 grams (= 1 DWT) and is 14.3mm in diameter (much heavier and larger than Hart’s tokens). It has a plain edge (Hart’s are reeded). It is gold plated gold. He has seen eight specimens, “always? worn.”

Editor’s Note: The reverse die looks a lot like the reverse on the Parka Head series.

FOR THE RECORD



ANCHORAGE: Anchorage Coin Club 20th Anniversary. 39mm, cupronickel. Probably also in silver.



DILLINGHAM: Willow Tree Inn, good for \$1.00 in trade, B-5. White metal (6.39 grams), 30mm. Too heavy to be aluminum.



FAIRBANKS: The Chena Club. Five chit booklets and a membership card. The lot was on eBay and realized \$338.33. Included were (2) \$5 booklets, black on blue; (2) \$5 booklets, blue on white; a \$10 booklet, black on yellow; and the membership card for Oct-Nov-Dec 1943. Two of the booklets were empty, the other three had a chit or two. The white \$5 books state on the cover "good at their face value in trade in both the Aliies Room and Alaska Bar."



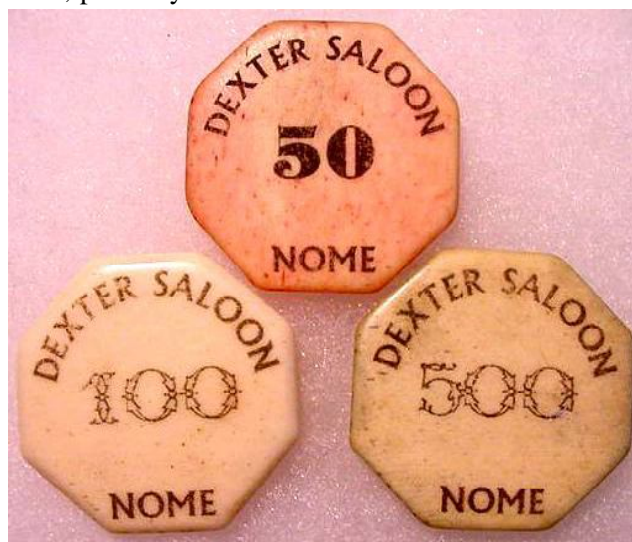
HAINES: Heller & Co., 50¢ in trade, B-7unlisted. Benice states that dies for other denominations are known.



NOME: Board of Trade, 12½¢, B-8. Looks like a cross between I and II (submitted by Kaye Dethridge).



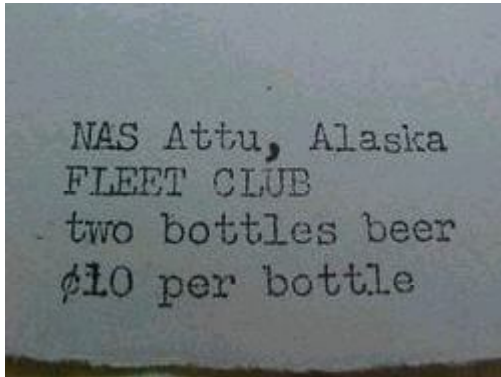
UNALASKA/DUTCH HARBOR: Heart of the Aleutian Islands. Very nice medal in bronze, and bronze with dark blue enamel (shown). By Northwest Territorial Mint, probably also in silver.



Back again on eBay. This is the clearest scan yet, as the others have been a bit blurry. I am still a non-believer! PR - \$

FOR THE RECORD - THREE QUESTIONABLE ITEMS

BELIEVABLE - MAYBE



ATTU: NAS Attu, Fleet Club, two bottles (of) beer. ¢10 per bottle. Typed on bluish paper. Two specimens were offered in one lot. Size not given. PR \$177.50.

NOT OUTSIDE THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY



An 1878 Silver Dollar counterstamped “Haines, Alaska.” The stampings appear to be from separate letters. While this is not impossible to be a period piece, we are reasonably skeptical. PR \$36.99.

AND THE WINNER IS...



“TEDDY BEAR” COIN METER PARKING TOKEN, HAINES, ALASKA

We quote directly from the ebay ad:

“Here’s a nice old Teddy Bear Head shaped COIN METER TOKEN from Haines, Alaska, 27mm Brass, grades a strong Extra Fine+, problem free. A nice smiling Teddy Bear head for your collection. I know this is not an actual transportation token as regarded in Atwood/ Coffee, but I figured being a parking meter token I’d list it under Trans. Tokens.”

How someone could make a leap from (we assume), the Teddy Bear Coffee Shop tokens to this is just beyond me. Unless, of course, there are parking meters in Haines??? And if so how old could they be??? At least with an opening bid of 99¢, the seller is not holding anyone up.

CHALLENGE COINS



(JUNEAU): U.S. Coast Guard, 17th District. The 17th District is based in Juneau. Light blue, dark blue, black and white on brass.



ALASKA: Alaska Army National Guard, presented by the commander for excellence, Brigadier General Craig N. Christensen. Black, green, red, and blue on brass.



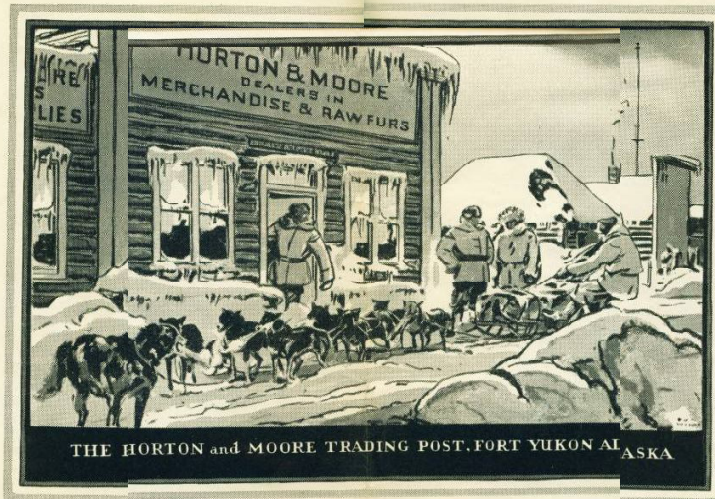
HOMER: USCGC Roanoke Island. Red, orange, blue, black and white on bronze.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Most Challenge Coins are about 38 to 40mm. Some are larger, some smaller. All are shown at about 38mm, but this may not be actual size. Actual size is noted where known. If the enamel is shown "on gold" or "on silver", this should be assumed to be gold colored or silver colored and not the actual metal.



ANCHORAGE: Anchorage Police Department challenge coins for Detectives, Bomb Squad, Dispatch, Firearms Instructors and Uniformed field services. Multi-colored, mostly black, blue and white. All are 39mm on silver, except Detectives which is on gold.

From far up in the Arctic Circle comes an amazing tribute to "Canada Dry"



When it's 65 below at Fort Yukon they drink this fine old Ginger Ale

WE HAVE just received a most interesting letter from Harry Horton, of Fort Yukon, Alaska.

This letter is of special value because Mr. Horton is the owner of the Horton & Moore trading post and is one of the most picturesque characters in the Far North—a trader who handles a hundred thousand dollars' worth of furs each season in addition to conducting his general store.

"You'll probably be surprised when you open this letter," writes Mr. Horton, "for I guess you never dreamed you had a friend so far away as Fort Yukon."

"You'll probably be even more surprised when I tell you that I have a bottle of Canada Dry beside me as I write. You folks who live so many thousands of miles away have no idea how thirsty a man can get when it's 65 below and the wind blows in from the Yukon River."

"It's been about three years since Mr. Humfrey, of Juneau, first told me about Canada Dry and I decided to order a case for my own use and for some of my friends, especially the captain of the steamer which calls here three times during the few months that navigation is open."

Only Twenty White People in the Village

"We've only twenty white people and about fifty Eskimos and Indians as the permanent population of Fort Yukon and I didn't think I could ever sell a high-class beverage like Canada Dry to the natives. Fact is, I didn't even try."

"Somehow or other, however, they got a taste of

it and pretty soon I found that they wouldn't be anything else—especially when several hundreds of them came in from miles around to sell their furs and hold their *pollaches* or celebrations."

"It certainly doesn't take these natives long to distinguish quality in any product and they are all crazy about Canada Dry."

"Most of them can't pronounce the name, but they can all point. And they just won't take anything else. Just now I'm ordering five cases a month and I think that's a great deal for a town like this."



Ask your dealer to show you this Hostess Package. Twelve bottles of "Canada Dry" in a convenient carton.

66 CANADA DRY 99

"The Champagne of Ginger Ale"

Extract imported from Canada and bottled in the U. S. A. by
Canada Dry Ginger Ale, Incorporated, 25 W. 43rd Street, New York N. Y.
In Canada, J. J. McLaughlin Limited. Established 1890.

NOTE—Fort Yukon is the most northern of the Yukon River and is eighteen miles inside the Arctic Circle. It is 125 miles west of Nome, frequently mentioned in the accounts of the North Pole flights of Byrd, Peary, Amundsen, Ellsworth and Noble.

"Personally, I don't know what I'd do if I didn't have a bottle of Canada Dry to cheer the long winter evenings. You've certainly helped to make life more livable, and for that I thank you."

In all our experience, we have never found a more sincere tribute to the universal appeal of "Canada Dry" than this letter from Mr. Horton.

One Ginger Ale that Knows
No Season—No Boundary

North—south—east—and west—in every nook and corner of this wide, wide world—you will find people drinking "Canada Dry" the whole year 'round for one all important reason. . . . Not just because it quenches thirst. Not just because of its wonderful flavor. Not just because it is made from real

Jamaica ginger! Not just because of its outstanding purity and quality.

They drink it because they find it more refreshing and invigorating than any other beverage they have ever tasted.

It is as welcome and exhilarating these brisk winter days as on the hottest afternoon in summer. As popular in the Savoy in London or in the Houses of Parliament in Ottawa as in the trading post of Horton & Moore at Fort Yukon, Alaska.

Chill a sparkling bottle of "Canada Dry" today and serve it with your luncheon or dinner. The ginger in it is good for you.

"Canada Dry" Mint Julep

(Individual service)

Pluck leaves from a few sprigs of mint. Crush a few mint leaves with thin strips of peel from half a medium-sized lemon. Add the juices of half a lemon and one lime. Stir in one scant tablespoon of powdered sugar and place on ice an hour. To serve, strain, pour in a tall glass and fill with "Canada Dry." Add a creme de menthe cherry, and a sprig of fresh mint.

This is just one of many delightful ways in which "Canada Dry" can be served. Many others are described in the famous *Add-A-Leaf Hostess Book*, which hundreds of women have called "the most practical recipe book ever printed." We will gladly send it to you for one dollar, the bare cost of preparation.

Look for the Name



on the Bottle Cap



This is a great, old, large ad for Canada Dry Ginger Ale. The illustration above is five scans put together. They don't match up perfectly, but well enough to read most of the ad (get out those bifocals!). Horton & Moore issued tokens in Fort Yukon.